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Homemakers' chat

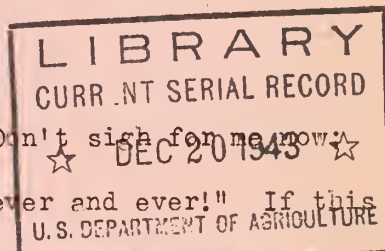
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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, December 13, 1943.

Subject: "GUARD AGAINST WARTIME FATIGUE." Information from the Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Remember the tired woman, whose last wishes were: "Don't sigh for me now. ★

don't grieve for me never. I'm going to do nothing for ever and ever!" If this poor woman lived today under the strain of wartime activities, she'd probably be still more tired....unless she learned to do her work in easier ways.

You do seem to have more housework to do these days, don't you? Just producing "3 squares" a day, trying to keep the family in clean clothes and the house orderly and comfortable. Maybe you have fewer hands at home to help you. Or you're slowed up in ways you can't control. For example, some members of the family may work on a night shift or at some other irregular hours. Instead of getting 3 meals a day, you have to prepare 5 or 6 meals. Marketing is much slower, more tiring, more confusing. You can't find some of your old menu standbys, and you try to conform to the "food fights for freedom" program by preventing food waste, saving and using leftovers. You have to hunt up new recipes and learn how to use them, and that takes time. There's extra work, too in other jobs.... laundry work, cleaning the house...many of the other tasks in ordinary housekeeping. So you often feel unusually tired at the end of the day.

Even before wartime changes in family living stepped up the pace for homemakers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported State and Federal extension workers were urging farm women to guard against getting too tired. Farm women have always had to work hard and do several kinds of jobs the city woman doesn't have. Some of the ideas already suggested by home demonstration agents are even more necessary now.

Do you use your energy and muscles correctly? Are your working surfaces the right height so you don't bend over them as you work? Sink, ironing board, wash-board and tub? You can raise the level of the dishpan by standing it on a varnished or painted rack or inverted pan in the sink. You can put blocks under the legs of the table, and make a stand for a portable wash tub. You can adjust most folding ironing boards to suit the comfort of the person who irons. In some cases stationary wash tubs can be raised. All such changes make your work easier and cut down fatigue.

Do you have good light and ventilation where you work? If you don't, you will feel more tired at the end of the day. A room that is too hot or too cold or noisy may tire you when you work in it. If your tired state is due to long working hours, it will pay you to shorten the time for each task if you possible can. Have you studied your various jobs to reduce the time for doing them and the number of arm motions made and steps taken? Do you wear suitable clothing for work? A plain, short, washable dress, or a coverall apron, or slacks, and low-heeled shoes? So little a thing as a slipping shoulder strap on your underwear may tire you. Use shoulder tapes and be free of this constant and tiring annoyance.

Clutter and disorder around you while you work makes you feel tired, even if you don't realize it. See whether you have good work centers for each kind of job, so arranged that you can route your work to save steps. Make a list of the tools you need in each center. Then get into the habit of putting each tool back in place after you use it, and don't let articles that have nothing to do with the job remain where you are working. For example, leaving the ironing board and iron around when you're finished with them. Keep the floor clear to avoid having to shift things out of your way.

Some jobs are tiring because they are monotonous. Doing a large ironing without a break is one of these. If you can change to some other work for a while...a job that uses a different set of muscles...or do part of the ironing

another day, you won't get so tired. Sometimes it's a matter of the time of day you do certain kinds of work. Almost everyone has a "zero hour" in the day when she feels more tired than at any other time. The ideal plan is to use this "tired period" for a brief rest. Relax completely, even if it's only for 10 minutes. If you can't do that, plan to do a "sit-down" job at that time, such as preparing vegetables or mending. Always sit down to a job if you can.

Down in Texas the extension workers report that they have talked over many of these same points with farm women, and also some others. They have particularly called attention to poor posture as one cause of fatigue. Keep your back erect as you work. They also say: "Straining or overusing muscles results in fatigue. Washing, especially, requires lots of effort. You bend, stoop, pick up baskets, reach...and perhaps wring out wet clothes. You can easily overuse your muscles.

"Next time you pick up a heavy bucket or basket...instead of bending at the waist...squat with one foot slightly behind the other...and use the large thigh muscles to help bring the body up. It's also a good idea to learn to use both hands in washing woodwork and windows. Then your right arm won't feel so tired the next day. And here's another tip: As you know, it's easier to carry two suitcases or two buckets of water than one. Balance helps reduce the strain."

Perhaps you, too, can make use of some of these ideas from extension workers in guarding against fatigue as you do your work. Try making a list of the things you have to do in the day before you. Write down also how long you think each task will take to do. If there are too many things to get into one day, decide which you can leave out. Postpone some jobs and get rid of others entirely.

Ask yourself as you look over your list which part of the day will be best for each task. Plan the heavier jobs early in the day when you are freshest. Treat each job as a separate unit and see if you can fit in a morning and afternoon "recess" between the work periods, just as they do in school. In these relaxing periods, rest if you can, or go out in the fresh air for a few minutes.

Then maybe your thoughts won't turn gloomily to the next world, like the poor woman whose idea of heaven was having nothing to do. Because there's still a lot of work to be done in our present world!

